

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX – WITHOUT BEING AWKWARD

COLLECTING A COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH HISTORY

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# INTRODUCTION

Jennifer A. Sobolik, CNP is a Certified Family Nurse Practitioner at the Community Health Center of the Black Hills, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Rapid City, South Dakota. She is the CNP for the Family Planning Program at CHCBH. In 2017, Jenn and her team started a new program to provide primary care for individuals living with HIV in the Black Hills Area.

Preferred Pronouns: She/her/her



# DISCLOSURES

None

# OBJECTIVES

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- List reasons to take a sexual history
- Identify barriers to sexual health history collection
- Demonstrate compassionate, effective communication
- Identify components of comprehensive sexual history
- Understand how information collected during sexual health history guides additional assessment needs



IDENTIFY THREE  
CHANGES YOU CAN  
MAKE IN YOUR OWN  
PRACTICE.

# WHY TAKE A SEXUAL HISTORY?

- Identify persons at risk for: STI, unplanned pregnancy, sexual abuse, sexual dysfunction and link to additional care/treatment when appropriate
- Early diagnosis and treatment of STIs and prevention of associated comorbidities
- Identify anatomic sites to use for STI screening
- Guide STI risk reduction strategies – condom use, PrEP



# WHY AREN'T WE COLLECTING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HISTORIES?

- Personal biases
- Fear of offending patients
- Uneasiness with sensitive subjects
- Competing priorities/Lack of time
- Academic curriculum
- Need more education about relationship between sexual health and overall health

# WHERE DO WE START?

- ▶ Environmental factors
  - ▶ Clean, quiet, private space
  - ▶ Welcoming staff
  - ▶ Signs and forms
    - ▶ Respectful and sensitive to various cultures and gender identities
  - ▶ Don't make them fill out a form if you aren't going to use it or reference it
    - ▶ Ok to use as a discussion guide



# FORM EXAMPLES

[HTTPS://AIDSETC.ORG/RESOURCE/SEXUAL-HISTORY-TAKING-TOOLKIT](https://aidsetc.org/resource/sexual-history-taking-toolkit)

[HTTPS://WWW.CDC.GOV/STOPSYPHILIS/TOOLKIT/HEALTHCAREPROVIDERS/SEXHISTORYDISCUSSIONFORM.PDF](https://www.cdc.gov/stopsyphilis/toolkit/healthcareproviders/sexhistorydiscussionform.pdf)

# WHERE DO WE START?

- ▶ Communication is Key!
  - ▶ Eye Contact
  - ▶ Be Present
- ▶ “Hi, it’s nice to meet you. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am the Nurse Practitioner helping you today. How would you prefer to be addressed?”
- ▶ Ask permission to discuss personal information



when someone says your name wrong but you never correct them

# COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Open-ended questions
  - ▶ “What is it that brings you in today?”
  - ▶ “What questions do you have for me?”
- ▶ Closed-ended questions
  - ▶ May be appropriate when you need specific answer
- ▶ Appropriate language – use anatomical terms

# COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Ask questions in a non-judgmental manner
  - ▶ “How many sex partners have you had in the last two months? Six months? Year? Lifetime?”
  - ▶ “Do you use condoms when you have sex?”
  - ▶ “Are your sexual partners male, female, or both?”

# The Five “Ps” of Sexual Health

- ▶ Partners
- ▶ Practices
- ▶ Protection from STIs
- ▶ Past Testing/Treatment of STIs
- ▶ Prevention of or Planning for Pregnancy



# PARTNERS

- ▶ Number of partner(s)
  - ▶ 2 months, 6 months, 12 months, lifetime
- ▶ Gender of partner(s) - “male, female, or both”
- ▶ Risk factors for partner(s)
  - ▶ Condom use, IVDU, HIV Status, multiple partners



# PRACTICES

- ▶ Do you have vaginal sex? – Penis in your vagina
- ▶ Do you have oral sex? – Penis in your mouth
- ▶ Do you have anal sex? – Penis in your anus
  
- ▶ Do you now or have you ever exchanged sex for money, drugs, housing, etc?

\*\*Understanding this helps us understand risk factors for STIs and unplanned pregnancy.\*\*

# PROTECTION from STIs

- ▶ Do you use condoms when you have sex?
  - ▶ If not, “Can you share the reason?”
  - ▶ If sometimes, “How often?”
- ▶ Are your vaccines up-to-date?
  - ▶ HPV, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Meningococcal Vaccine
- ▶ Risk factors for partner(s)
  - ▶ Condom use, IVDU, HIV Status, Multiple Partners

# PAST HISTORY of STIs

- ▶ Record history of any STIs
  - ▶ Type
  - ▶ Date
  - ▶ Treatment received
    - ▶ If Syphilis – Stage, RPR Titer
  - ▶ Request prior records if possible
- ▶ Risk factors for partner(s)
  - ▶ Condom use, IVDU, HIV Status, Multiple Partners

# Pregnancy – Planning and Prevention

- ▶ Female Sex –
  - ▶ LMP
  - ▶ “Do you have a uterus and/or ovaries?”
  - ▶ Have you ever been pregnant? (Gravida, Para)
  - ▶ “Is there a possibility you could be pregnant today?”
  - ▶ “Are you planning to become pregnant or father a child in the next 12-24 months?”
- ▶ Male Sex –
  - ▶ “Do you have any children?”
  - ▶ “Are you planning to parent a child in the next 12-24 months?”

# PREGNANCY – Planning and Prevention

- ▶ Condom use
- ▶ Contraceptive use
  - ▶ Are you on any form of birth control? Is your partner on any form of birth control?
    - ▶ Offer if patient wishes to start

# Special Considerations for Transgender Patients

- ▶ Anatomy
  - ▶ Transgender Males (FTM)
    - ▶ Evaluate presence/absence of uterus and ovaries
    - ▶ Mastectomy status
  - ▶ Transgender Females (MTF)
    - ▶ Breast surgery status
    - ▶ Evaluate presence/absence of penis/testicles

## ADDITIONAL INFO

- ▶ Where are you at in your process of transition?
- ▶ Are you on any hormone therapy?
- ▶ Have you ever had or are you planning to have surgical procedures?

# Special Considerations for Abuse Victims

- ▶ Confirmed or Suspected Abuse
  - ▶ Recognize this may
- ▶ Mandatory Reporting
  - ▶ Know your state laws
  - ▶ Disclose to patient before you collect information
- ▶ Offering Help
  - ▶ May not accept on first attempt
  - ▶ Know your local resources



Don't... Be... Awkward

# Pay Attention



# WHAT NOT TO SAY....

- ▶ Avoid judgmental statements/questions
  - ▶ “That’s a lot of sex partners for someone your age.”
  - ▶ “You aren’t having sex without condoms, are you?”
  - ▶ “You probably just have female partners, right?”

# Missed Opportunities

- ▶ Condoms?
- ▶ Contraceptives?
- ▶ Cervical Cancer Screening?
- ▶ Comprehensive exam?
- ▶ Connect to additional care?

# PrEP Services

Don't hesitate to start the conversation.

“Is there anything else you would like me to help with today?”

(And don't ask this question with one hand on the door.)

# REFERENCES

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [A Guide to Taking a Sexual History](#). Accessed February 9, 2021.
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- American Academy of Family Physicians. [Taking an Accurate Sexual History Sample Script](#). Accessed February 9, 2021.
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [2015 Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines – Clinical Prevention Guidance](#). Accessed February 9, 2021.